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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-eighth session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation

(*Item 3 (c)*)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations from the programme evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

1. At its 10th meeting, on 12 June 2018, the Committee considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations from the programme evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (E/AC.51/2018/6).

2. The Assistant Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services introduced the report and, together with representatives of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, responded to questions raised during its consideration by the Committee.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed support for UNHCR in its work of protecting and assisting refugees in increasingly complex situations. A delegation expressed the view that the work of UNHCR was an important part of the international commitment to strengthening peace, security and stability. Particular appreciation was expressed for the work undertaken with regard to the promotion of safe and durable solutions for persons of concern, namely, voluntary repatriation, resettlement and local integration. A delegation stressed the view that voluntary repatriations were a priority, in particular for protracted situations. Another delegation, reminding the Committee that

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refugees and migrants were at the heart of humanitarian action worldwide and that people were "risking their lives in floating funeral boxes", stressed that the true solution was the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Poverty reduction, so the delegation stressed, would bring about durable solutions upstream. A number of delegations commended the effective and collaborative working relationship that their Governments had with UNHCR, as well as the efforts of UNHCR to cooperate and coordinate with Governments and development partners.

4. Delegations acknowledged with appreciation the report of OIOS and the assessments made therein of UNHCR progress towards the implementation of recommendations on durable solutions. A delegation, while finding the report to be positive, questioned whether the design of the review had led to limitations on how UNHCR could actually be evaluated. A delegation also noted that there was no one-size-fits-all solution. Delegations commended UNHCR for fully implementing four recommendations (1–3 and 5) and partially implementing two (4 and 6). Delegations expressed appreciation for the steps that UNHCR had taken to implement the recommendations and strengthen its work on durable solutions. Several delegations cited the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants, contained in General Assembly resolution 71/1, and expressed appreciation for its goals of working towards solutions from the outset of a displacement crisis, reducing burdens on host countries and sharing responsibilities with developed countries.

5. A delegation enquired whether UNHCR agreed with the conclusions of OIOS presented in paragraph 54 of the report, namely, that three important changes remained to be fully implemented: (a) continued and more systematic efforts were required in order to strengthen skills for creating, implementing and assessing solutions strategies; (b) the recently established Division of Resilience and Solutions had yet to be made operational which, once fully functional, could potentially plan and coordinate evaluation and research activities for solutions at the corporate level; and (c) there was a continued need to better organize and bring together documented experience around solutions in an easily accessible place.

6. A number of delegations questioned the focus of the evaluation on process rather than on impact and noted that assessments of impact would increase utility. It was also noted that, despite the significant progress made by UNHCR in implementing the recommendations, there had been little corresponding progress in durable solutions results, namely, a reduction in total numbers of persons of concern. Information was sought on how progress was measured in terms of finding durable solutions, what the statistical trends were with regard to returns in the past five years and whether there were any linkages with the implementation of recommendations by UNHCR. In that regard, a question was raised as to whether the work of OIOS was as useful as it could be. A delegation also questioned the utility and feasibility of some of the recommendations when it came to actual work on the ground, for example, the capacity-building activities related to recommendation 4, on developing a staff strategy for strengthening solution activities.

7. Delegations welcomed the decision of UNHCR to gradually adopt multi-year, multi-partner protection and solutions strategies and to introduce a multi-year planning tool for solutions-related activities in line with recommendation 1, on implementing multi-year planning and funding for solutions. A delegation expressed the view that multi-year planning should not, however, be an aim in and of itself, but a means to assist in addressing refugee issues.

8. Support was expressed for enhanced advocacy in accordance with recommendation 2, on developing advocacy strategies for solutions. Particular appreciation was expressed for the 10-year campaign to end statelessness and for the efforts of UNHCR in bolstering its partnerships, including with the World Bank. It

was hoped that such partnerships would expand the donor base. A delegation indicated that emerging countries of resettlement needed better information on their role.

9. In relation to recommendation 3, on enhancing partnerships with development actors, a delegation expressed the view that the humanitarian development approach required more careful consideration in conformity with the principle of origin. As regards the comprehensive refugee response framework, which was aimed at easing pressures on the host countries involved, enhancing refugee self-reliance and supporting conditions in countries of origin for return with safety and dignity, one delegation welcomed early successes in the practical application of the framework and another delegation urged UNHCR to provide a more detailed evaluation of applying the framework in the 13 pilot countries, with descriptions of results in each country. A delegation expressed the view that the framework focused disproportionately on its second goal, resilience, over the other solutions-related goals, and stressed that all goals needed to be implemented at the same pace.

10. As regards recommendation 5, on conducting an assessment of organizational structure for solutions, several delegations noted the creation of the new Division of Resilience and Solutions and a delegation expressed its agreement with the observation, made by OIOS, that UNHCR would need time to determine the full impact of the new structure. A few delegations noted that UNHCR was undertaking deeper structural and programmatic reforms, and expressed the hope that those reforms would enable UNHCR to fulfil its core mandate more effectively and efficiently. A delegation sought information on the structure of the Division and the number of its staff, including whether there had been an overall increase in the number of staff or whether staff had been redeployed from other departments and divisions. Information was also sought on whether the establishment of the Division had been agreed upon by Member States.

11. A delegation expressed appreciation for the work done by UNHCR in relation to recommendation 6, on creating an evidence-based portfolio for solutions, and requested that UNHCR continue to ensure its full implementation. The delegation also stressed the importance of being fully updated regarding the development and implementation of the activities of UNHCR in this regard.

Conclusions and recommendations

12. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly take note of the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the triennial review of the implementation of the recommendations made by the Committee for Programme and Coordination on the programme evaluation of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.**

13. **The Committee commended the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees for the progress that it had made in implementing the OIOS recommendations, and encouraged the High Commissioner to implement the outstanding actions identified by OIOS in the triennial review.**

14. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly recommend that, when carrying out its activities and implementing recommendations contained in the report of OIOS, UNHCR act fully in accordance with its mandate and in cooperation with countries hosting refugees and countries of origin.**

15. **The Committee underlined that, whenever possible, evaluations should focus on measuring effective results and impacts and, in that regard, underlined the need for continued evaluation of how activities, measures and reforms undertaken by UNHCR concretely contributed to durable solutions to refugee situations.**

16. **The Committee noted with appreciation the implementation of recommendation 1 in the OIOS report, on the importance of multi-year planning and funding, and recommended that the General Assembly encourage UNHCR to strengthen its efforts in that field.**

17. **The Committee noted with appreciation the implementation of recommendation 2 in the OIOS report, and emphasized the importance of global advocacy tools in promoting durable solutions to refugee situations, including through focusing on voluntary sustainable and timely return in safety and dignity to countries of origin, which encompassed repatriation, reintegration, rehabilitation and reconstruction activities.**

18. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request UNHCR to provide Member States with details and analysis regarding the results of the pilot application of the comprehensive refugee response framework in 13 countries, as appropriate.**